The Cartoonist

Clown time is not itself a clown – Martin Hohodegger

Zero Philosophy
Nov 23, 2020

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As a graphic novel creator, he'd learnt to harden himself against disrespect.

"Are they supposed to be funny?"

The question annoyed him, every time. "What do you think?" he'd snap. "Do they look funny to you?"

It was less the tacit accusation of failure, actually, than the word. It enraged him. 'Funny' was more horrible than 'horrible' itself. Work at the word, and it quickly became unbearable. There was 'funny haha' – and then there was the other thing.

"They're *about* funny," was the answer he gave this time, which was more productive. "That's not quite the opposite, but nearer."

The two sentences exhausted his patience.

There was a thread of sophisticated humor in his work, of course. It might even be considered comedy of a kind. This involved a terrible proximity. Reaction against this closeness meant comedians could find themselves sucked into the irrational fear of clowns. *Coulrophobia* it was called. He'd only narrowly avoided it himself.

"Why focus on the comic element?" he grumbled. "There's a lot more going on."

"Yes, of course, but the comedy seems quite prominent."

The Cartoonist scowled. He couldn't remember why he'd agreed to this interview. His work was being misinterpreted, with every word exchanged.

It was annoying, because clowns did creep in. Despite loathing them, and having no interest in promoting their existence, it was almost always somehow necessary to include them. Until the clowns peeked into the story, the point – whatever it happened to be – could not quite be made. There was no way around them. Each time he would mentally wrestle with the final pages, checked, paralyzed, while the clown waited patiently to be invited in.

"It's horrible," he admitted. "Comics, clowns, clowning, they're unbearable."

“Then why always involve them?”

His patience snapped. “Don’t you *fucking understand?*” he snarled. “Can you really not fucking see what’s happening here?” He jabbed towards his interlocutor aggressively with his right index finger. “*You* do this. You open the fucking door to them, you utter fuck.”

“How does that make any sense?”

“Don’t get cute.”

“You’ve always done this, since before I even knew you existed.”

The incursion went back so far, it was true. They had been lurking in the margins from the beginning. Fixed artificial grins taunted him. He’d fought them back, frame by frame, to the end of the work. Soon they would be gone.

“I’m the only person who’s seriously tried to stop them,” he said. “Everything I’ve ever done has been about that struggle. It shouldn’t be so difficult to understand.”

“I’ve always wondered why you needed them at all.” The words were scarcely audible, muffled by extreme caution. His interviewer was sweating, and perhaps even shivering.

“You think I could just leave them out completely?” the Cartoonist sneered. “I could just pretend they don’t exist, and concentrate on other things? Maybe I could create a *Clownless World* series?”

“Why would you call it that, though?”

“You really think you have all the answers, don’t you? And all the time they’re getting stronger.”

It was incredible how many pretended not to see that. The irresponsibility of it sometimes shook him to the foundations of his being.

The interview was taking an ever more ominous turn. “There are certainly more of them – in your books.”

“What the *fuck* are you trying to imply?”

“I’m just saying that in your first book there wasn’t a single clown until page five, but in the latest one there’s a clown in the first frame.”

“It’s a clown *mug*. There’s someone drinking coffee from a cup, which happens to have a clown picture on it. That’s not a clown. It’s not close to being a clown. Jesus!”

“What about the clown clock?”

“That’s also not a clown. What the fuck’s wrong with you? Don’t you know what a clown is? Haven’t you ever been attacked by clowns?”

“Honestly, no.”

“Then you know nothing about them,” the Cartoonist howled, losing it more than a little, before partially recovering. “You know *nothing*. That’s if you’re in fact being honest, which I have to seriously doubt.”

“You think it’s improbable I could have escaped clown assault?”

“You’re really sticking to that story?”

“I’m sure it’s not an uncommon claim.”

The Cartoonist had come across the same kind of denial before, actually quite often. He was already exhausted by it. Extreme trauma had to be the root explanation, he supposed. Whatever the cause, the irrationality was impregnable. Engagement was pointless. He sighed deeply. “You’re obviously not a serious person,” he snapped, beyond weariness. “Are we done here?”

“There’s just one question, really. Do you think your core audience comes for the clowning?”

A stunned moment was needed to register the words. This wasn’t an interview, or even an interrogation, but a knifing.

“*Clowning*,” he repeated. “You’re accusing my books of *clowning*?”

A fraction of a second before hurling his laptop across the room he reminded himself that he was making it all up. The creative process had been especially lively recently. There were several pages here, perhaps more.

He worked the mouse to sketch his impression of the interviewer, then sat back, roughly satisfied. The general appearance of his visitor had been captured almost uncannily, but he’d botched the clown T-shirt.

5 Comments

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(((:):))(:):::: Nov 23, 2020

CLOWN = 22 in AO, AZ, QWERTY2 gematrias. (QQ 16; QWERTY1 64.)

22 major arcana, letters in the Hebrew alphabet (& paths in the ToL)... "22, v'là les flics!" (Catch.)

CLOWNLESS WORLD = QQ-33 = CLOWN TIME.

CLOWN TIME IS RUNNING OUT. CAN WHAT IS CLOWNING YOU MAKE IT TO LEVEL 2? = GoN1-57 = MARTIN HOHODEGGER.

CLOWN ASSAULT = QQ-34 = CLOWNER SALT.

More to come ("yeah, sure").

♡ 2 Reply Collapse

Trey McMullen May 14, 2021

I come for a lot of things including, and perhaps especially, the clowning.

CLOWN = AQ 112 = WATER

♡ Reply Collapse

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